

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF CONVENTIONAL WARFARE, HELD AT NIEBORÓW, POLAND, DURING 13–17 SEPTEMBER 1987

This select Symposium was convened by Professor Dr Bogusław A. Molski, Director of the Botanical Garden of the Polish Academy of Sciences, in order to explore the question of environmental disruption by conventional warfare. The group consisted of 12 scholars and 2 observers from 8 countries—East, West, and ‘neutral’—drawn from both the natural and social sciences. The papers presented fell into three categories: current trends in conventional weaponry and strategy, impact on specific habitats, and cultural and legal dimensions.

One of the major points to emerge from the Symposium was that developments since World War II in weapons and their means of employment will, even in the event of non-nuclear war, result in unprecedented environmental disruption over wide areas. Indeed, military doctrines of the major powers were believed to make such environmental destruction inescapable. Among the habitats which received particular attention were the agricultural, forest, freshwater, and semi-arid, ones. A major concern expressed was that if conventional war were to erupt in a densely-populated region such as central Europe, environmental damage and its persistence would be greatly magnified by such collateral effects as the release of radioactive or toxic chemicals following the destruction of nuclear or chemical facilities.

Conventional wars in less densely-populated habitats were also seen to be highly destructive of the environment. It was shown, for example, that warfare in semi-arid regions has a devastating effect on the ‘regional ecology’, exacerbating desertification and worsening the human condition there. The Symposium concluded with a discussion of the prevailing cultural norms and their expression in (and reinforcement by) international legal instruments, recognizing the present inadequacy of both.

The proceedings of the Symposium are to be published. The ecotoxicology of conventional warfare, through the release of dangerous forces, was seen to be an urgent priority for further investigation. It is to be the subject of a follow-up symposium in two years’ time.

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SECOND INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CHEMISTRY CONGRESS IN BRAZIL, HELD AT SALVADOR, BAHIA, BRAZIL, DURING 16–18 SEPTEMBER 1987

From 16 to 18 September 1987, the 2nd International Environmental Chemistry Congress in Brazil was held at Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. An International Organizing Committee under the chairmanship of Professor Tania M. Tavares, Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), was responsible for the establishment of the scientific programme of this event, the local organization being in the hands of staff members of the Chemistry Institute, in particular of the Department of Analytical Chemistry of the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA).

Whereas the first Congress of this type, which had been held in June 1985 similarly at Salvador, was a national event with some international contributions, the second one was planned from the beginning as an international meeting, with promotion through UFBA, the Brazilian Chemical Society (SBQ), and the International Association of Environmental Analytical Chemistry (IAEAC). Accord-

ingly the scientific programme consisted of contributions—invited lectures as well as submitted oral and poster presentations—originating from 9 countries, including Brazil. There were 233 participants in all.

The efforts made by the Organizing Committee, the effective cooperation of the participants, and last but not least the general support by national and international sponsors, made possible the successful implementation of a programme of international standard, covering the tremendously wide range of environmental chemistry. The transport and fate of chemicals in the atmosphere, in oceans, in soils, and in ground-water, were all treated, as also were aspects of forest die-back and mutagenicity. So were various topics which are very specific but currently of great general interest, such as the Chernobyl disaster or protection of building materials and works of art. It should also be mentioned that the analytical techniques which are necessary to carry out environmental chemical investigations had an important place in many of the contributions.

As already mentioned, the scientific part of the Congress was of international standard. In contrast, the social part was of local standard, which in this case means an even higher ranking; for there can scarcely be anywhere in the world where the people are able to offer such a variety of outstanding social events as we enjoyed in Bahia.

Altogether the Congress was a great success, and it is hoped that its output will act as a stimulus for future scientific interaction between the Brazilian environmental research community and its international counterparts. If this goal can be reached, the organizers would be willing to come up with the 3rd such Congress in about three years’ time.

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THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL FUTURE: MAINTENANCE OF THE BIOSPHERE, HELD IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH, EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND, UK, DURING 24–26 SEPTEMBER 1987

This ‘3rd ICEF’ was sponsored by the Foundation for Environmental Conservation and the University of Edinburgh, and was generously hosted by the latter in deference to the impending retirement of its Principal & Vice-Chancellor, Sir John Burnett, responsibility for contributing the budget being shared by these two main sponsors with the support of other donors including the United Nations Environment Programme, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Royal Society, the Goldsmiths’ Company, WWF India, and others in various ways.

Planned to set the stage for a much larger 4th ICEF (preferably about two years later and under suitable national auspices in the manner of its predecessors), this 3rd ICEF had as its sessional themes: (1) *The Global System of Nature and the World Stage of Man* (under the Chairmanship of Professor Sir David Smith, Principal-elect of the University of Edinburgh); (2) *The Biosphere in Transition* (Chairman: Dr Thomas F. Malone, formerly Foreign Secretary of the United States National Academy of Sciences); (3) *Global Priorities* (Chairman: Dr George M. Woodwell, Director of the Woods Hole Research Center, Woods Hole, Massachusetts); (4) *The Attainable Ideal in Human and Ecological Terms* (Chairman: Professor Aub-

rey W.G. Manning, Professor of Zoology, University of Edinburgh); and (5) *Practical Targets for Sustainability and Development* (Chairman: Professor Donald J. Kuenen, Rector Magnificus, Emeritus, University of Leyden, The Netherlands, and a former President of IUCN).

Each of the first Four Sessions consisted of two keynote papers on different aspects of its general theme (as assigned by the Conference's Steering Committee, but often altered as to titles by their Authors) and, having been circulated whenever possible in advance, presented in the form of 12–15 minutes' résumés each. These were followed by comments from three panellists (coming from at least two different continents) and then an open discussion for about half of the Session's time. Participants having, with very few exceptions, been invited for their pertinent specialist knowledge and general prowess, the papers and ensuing comments were usually of high quality and individually stimulating.

Contributors of papers in the first four Sessions were Professor Sir John Burnett, Professor José A. Furtado, H.E. Professor Olav Gjaerevoll, Dr Michael Gwynne, Professor Michael McElroy, Professor Fred T. Last, Professor Lynton K. Caldwell, and Dr Arthur H. Westing. The Fifth Session differed from the others in consisting of a single paper by Dr Martin W. Holdgate, Chief Environment Scientist, UK Department of the Environment, followed by panellist comments from leaders from all six naturally-inhabited continents and then wide-ranging open discussion.

The general opinion seemed to be—without any serious dissension so far as we are aware—that the Conference had been at a high level and useful, but that its successor should if possible be more action-orientated, with more effective integration of specialist interests than had been attained on this occasion. Let us be clear with our messages, solid in their bases, and firm in putting them over especially to the decision-makers, at the same time threatening those last with the dire consequences of inaction or malaction as the best clout we can use.

Among ancillaries of the Conference should be mentioned the Second Baer-Huxley Memorial Lecture, of Mrs Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway and Chairman of the World Commission on Environment and



FIG. 2. Part of the square of the Foundation's farewell dinner given at the Overseas League Scottish Headquarters: from left to right are Dr Ulrich E. Loening (Co-organizer of the Conference), the host, Dr Genady N. Golubev (Assistant Executive-Director of UNEP), Professor J. Gordon Nelson (University of Waterloo, Canada), Mrs Nelson, Professor Lynton Keith Caldwell (Indiana University, USA), and Mrs Loening. Photo: Dr Eddie K.S. Hum.

Development, on 'Our Common Future—Call for Action', which was delivered by H.E. Martin Huslid, Norwegian Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, in his Prime Minister's absence to attend the funeral of Norway's greatest post-war politician. The lecture is published on pages 291–4 of this present issue, and will be repeated with its introduction and following discussion in the proceedings volume of this Conference (see below). Also to be expected is an Edinburgh Imperative on Maintaining the Biosphere, as an outcome of work by the earlier-nominated international Resolutions Committee under the leadership of Professor Donald J. Kuenen. There were also a Conference Dinner, given by the University of Edinburgh (Fig. 1), and a farewell dinner given by the other sponsor, the Foundation for Environmental Conservation, at the Overseas League Scottish headquarters (Fig. 2).

Other ancillaries of the Conference—taking advantage of the presence of more than a quorum of Councillors and Editorial Board members, respectively—were the Fourth Annual General Meeting of the World Council For The Biosphere and a special meeting of the Editorial Board of the Cambridge Studies in Environmental Policy.

Finally it should be announced that the Proceedings of this Third International Conference on Environmental Future are to be edited by the undersigned and Sir John Burnett, for publication by the Edinburgh University Press, under the title of Maintenance of The Biosphere—it is hoped by the summer of 1988.

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FIG. 1. Some personalities at the Conference dinner given by the University of Edinburgh: from left to right are Professor José I. Furtado (Science Adviser to the Commonwealth, largely obscured by) Sir John Burnett (Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University), your Editor, Dr G.M. Oza (Secretary-General of INSONA), Mrs Helen E. Polunin (your Editor's 'better half'), Dr Eddie K.S. Hum (Secretary-General of the Asian Society for Environmental Protection), H.E. Martin Huslid (Norwegian Ambassador), and Dr Michel Batisse ('father' of Biosphere Reserves and now of the Mediterranean 'Blue Plan').

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT, HELD AT BEIJING NORMAL UNIVERSITY, BEIJING, CHINA, DURING 21–27 OCTOBER 1987

This week-long International Symposium on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) came to a satisfactory conclusion at Beijing Normal University, Beijing, China, on 27 October 1987. The Symposium was organized by the Institute of Environmental Sciences at Beijing Normal University, with the support of the State Education Com-